WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE A. F. OF L., BY INSTRUCTION OF ST. LOUIS CONVENTION, DIRECTED THE OFFICERS AT HEADQUARTERS TO FURNISH A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER, FREE OF COST, TO ALL OFFICIAL LABOR PUBLICATIONS,

Containing a brief summary of important matters, affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will further the development and progress of the trade union movement.

No. 38.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
HEADQUARTERS
801-809 G ST. N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.
FRANK MORRISON, SECRETARY SAMUEL GOMPERS, PRESIDENT

GOVERNMENT 8 HOUR BILL

National House of Representatives Unanimously Passes Labor's Shorter Work Day Measure.

Washington, Dec. 23.--On Dec. 14 Chairman Wilson (coal miner) of the Labor Committee called up on the floor of the House H. R. 9061, the Hughes 8 hour bill. After a short discussion and the adding of a few minor amendments the bill passed unanimously. The bill, as passed, is as follows:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That every contract hereafter made to which the United States, any Territory, or the District of Columbia is a party, and every such contract made for or on behalf of the United States, or any Territory, or said District, which may require or involve the employment of laborers or mechanics shall contain a provision that no laborer or mechanic doing any part of the work contemplated by the contract, in the employ of the contractor or any sub-contractor contracting for any part of said work contemplated, shall be required or permitted to work more than eight hours in any one calendar day upon such work; and every such contract shall stipulate a penalty for each violation of such provision in such contract of five dollars for each laborer or mechanic for every calendar day in which he shall be required or permitted to labor more than eight hours upon said work; and any officer or person designated as inspector of the work to be performed under any such contract, or to aid in enforcing the fulfillment thereof, shall, upon observation or investigation, forthwith report to the proper officer of the United States, or of any Territory, or of the District of Columbia, all violations of the provisions of this Act directed to be made in every such contract, together with the name of each laborer or mechanic who has been required or permitted to labor in violation of such stipulation and the day of such violation, and the amount of the penalties imposed according to the stipulation in any such contract shall be directed to be withheld for the use and benefit of the United States, the District of Columbia, or the Territory contracting by the officer or person whose duty it shall be to approve the payment of the moneys due under such contract, whether the violation of the provisions of such contract is by the contractor or any sub-contractor. Any contractor or sub-contractor aggrieved by the withholding of any penalty as hereinbefore provided shall have the right within six months thereafter to appeal to the head of the depart-

ment making the contract on behalf of the United States or the Territory and in the case of a contract made by the District of Columbia to the Commissioners thereof, who shall have power to review the action imposing the penalty, and in all such appeals from such final order whereby a contractor or subcontractor may be aggrieved by the imposition of the penalty hereinbefore provided such contractor or subcontractor may within six months thereafter file a claim in the Court of Claims, which shall have jurisdiction to hear and decide the matter in like manner as in other cases before said court."

"SEC. 2. That nothing in this Act shall apply to contracts for transportation by land or water, or for the transmission of intelligence, or for such materials or articles as may usually be bought in open market, except armor and armor plate, whether made to conform to particular specifications or not, or for the purchase of supplies by the Government, whether manufactured to conform to particular specifications or not: Provided, That all classes of work which have been, are now, or may hereafter be performed by the Government shall, when done by contract for or on behalf of the United States, any Territory, or said District, by individuals, firms, or corporations, be performed in accordance with the terms and provisions of this Act. The President, by Executive order, may waive the provisions and stipulations in this Act as to any specific contract or contracts during time of war or a time when war is imminent. No penalties shall be imposed for any violation of such provision in such contract due to any emergency caused by fire, famine, or flood, by danger to life or to property, or by other extraordinary event or condition on account of which the President shall subsequently declare the violation to have been justifiable. Nothing in this Act shall be construed to repeal or modify the Act entitled "An Act relating to the limitation of the hours of daily service of laborers and mechanics employed on the public works of the United States and of the District of Columbia, being chapter three hundred and fifty-two of the laws of the Fifty-second Congress, approved August first, 1892, or to apply to work done under contracts made prior to the passage of this Act."

PRISONS BREEDERS OF DISEASE

Washington, Dec. 23.—It has long been contended that our prisons are fertile breeders of tuberculosis. The inmates infected during confinement spread the germs when released, and even more important, the goods made in prisons are infected with the bacilli of the disease and act as carriers of the dread malady. This fact is confirmed by Dr. J. A. Hayne, secretary of the state board of health of South Carolina, who in speaking of the action of the board in reference to the hosiery mill at the penitentiary, said: "We reiterated our position that the hosiery mill at the penitentiary was not a proper employment for convicts, was deleterious to health and should be abolished. The board at a former meeting recommended that the hosiery mill be abolished, and Governor Blease took the same stand, it being alleged that it was a 'consumptive' mill, to use the expression of the governor in several speeches. It has been held that the hosiery mill is a breeder of consumption and, in addition to shortening the lives of the convicts employed there, when turned loose after serving their sentences, endanger the lives of the people of the state by spreading the consumptive germs. The state board strongly advises its abolition. This matter will undoubtedly come before the legislature at its coming session."

FOOLISH RUMOR

Washington, Dec. 23.—Frank J. Hayes, Vice-President of the United Mine Workers of America, in a statement before the Convention of the American Federation of Labor, at Atlanta, positively and emphatically denied the rumor that the miners were considering withdrawing from the A. F. of L. He stated that the miners had always been loyal to the trade union movement and would continue so in the future. In spite of this, there are one or two publications that persist in repeating the rumor. Undoubtedly Vice-President Hayes voiced the sentiments of the rank and file of the coal miners when he made his statement, and certainly he is more familiar with the attitude of the miners than any other individual outside of the organization.

LABEL BOOSTERS

Washington, Dec. 23.—Advertising matter issued by the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives of Great Britain has just reached headquarters. The Boot and Shoe Workers of England are following in the footsteps of some of our union label boosting organizations. As has been stated before in these letters, this organization has adopted a union label or stamp to be placed upon this product. It must be remembered that in Great Britain union labels are extremely rare, but the organization referred to has opened up a campaign that is, indeed, commendable. A list of the stores or retail shops carrying union labeled shoes comprises a portion of their advertising matter. An extremely large number of cooperative societies are now handling union labeled boots and shoes. Fourteen large factories are now using the union stamp.

RETIREMENT BILL BEING DRAWN

Washington, Dec. 23.—Senator Cummins of Iowa, Chairman of Senate Committee on Civil Service, is expected to complete and introduce his bill for the retirement of Government clerks, in a short time; he says: "I have completed that portion of the bill relating to the retirement of veteran employes in the Civil Service, but the bill will also include a plan for the reclassification of all the employes in the service and for promotions and demotions. It is that feature which I am now working out. The retirement system to be proposed is a contributory plan, not the straight out pension plan. Other details I would prefer to announce when the bill is introduced."

INCREASED COST OF LIVING

Southampton, Dec. 23.—During the past five years there has been an advance of 20 per cent in the purchase price of the following necessities in the markets of Southampton consular district: Fresh beef, mutton, bacon, hams, butter, eggs, fruits, tea, dried fruits, sugar, coffee, fuel, tinned goods, women's apparel, footwear, clothing, cotton goods, bedding, furniture and underwear. All these articles enter this port duty free except tea, sugar, coffee, dried fruit and those things which have an added sugar content. There has also been an advance in the price of nearly every class of raw material. The price of flour has fluctuated, but is classified as among the dearer commodities.

MAGNIFICENT SHOWING

Journeymen Stone Cutters' Association Making Progress That Is A Glowing Tribute To Its Executive Officers.

Washington, Dec. 23.--The Journeymen Stonecutters Association, during the past year has made most remarkable progress. General Secretary-Treasurer James F. McHugh, in speaking of the wonderful advance made has this to say of the general membership: "They brought it about without the slightest friction between themselves and their employers. Intelligent committees were appointed who discussed the proposition with the bosses, man fashion, and gave and took as the case deserved. They did not demand the keys to the safe or turning over the employer's business to them, but went about it just like good, square union men, making their wants known, showing why they deserved what they asked for. Their arguments were sensible and just." There were 66 branches receiving an increase during the past year, ranging from ten cents to $1.00 per day. The total increase aggregates in additional wages paid to the men approximately $250,000 a year. In addition to this there have been added to the Association 24 new branches. In nearly all of which an increase in wages was secured as the result of organization. In 9 cities the Saturday half holiday has been secured. In 15 cities where there have been men outside of the union, as a result of the activity of the general union and the local unions, all men employed in the trade have been induced to make common cause with the union men, thus making them solidly organized. The dual organization which has been contesting the supremacy of the Journeymen Stonecutters Association is in a sorry plight with a rapidly dwindling number of adherents. The General Executive Officers and the membership of this organization are to be congratulated upon the splendid ability and spirit which is made manifest by this great advance during the past year.

PASSENGER SHIPS UNDERMANNED

Washington, Dec. 23.--William H. Frazier, Secretary of the International Seamen's Union, stated before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries recently, that a majority of passenger carrying ships on the Atlantic Coast did not carry a sufficient crew to hang the life boats. He said that most of the ships carried only boats enough for 75 per cent of the passenger carrying capacity of the ships. Mr. Frazier also stated that in all of his experience he had never seen a boat drill at sea where the life boats were swung out on the davits, and also declared that the Slocum disaster was due to an insufficient crew, asserting that the loss of life would have been reduced one-half had a proper crew been on board the boat.

TO INCREASE OPERATORS ON SHIPS

Washington, Dec. 23.--Senator Hitchcock of Nebraska, has introduced a bill to compel vessels carrying wireless telegraphy to provide for two operators in order that the vessel may be in constant communication with wireless stations.

At Rome, Ga. the plasterers have secured a raise of 50 cents a day and the 8 hour day.

SPEEDING UP CONVICTS

Treatment Accorded Incarcerated Men a Disgrace to Our Twentieth Century Civilization.

Hartford, Conn., Dec. 23.—The merciless speeding up of the convicts in the State Prison of Connecticut and in several of the county jails has aroused a storm of indignation and horror. The two contracting corporations whose demands have forced the prison officials to resort to physical punishment in order to get the maximum output—The Ford Johnson Co., and the Reliance Mfg. Co., manufacturing chairs and shirts, respectively, have been severely condemned at a meeting of the Hartford Get-Together Club a few days ago. Said a prominent social worker: "The physical punishment of the convict by the contractor who has leased him for industrial purposes, is a disgrace to the community which tolerates its continuance, yet the citizens of Connecticut stand meekly by and let a political boss remark: 'Well what in h--l are you going to do about it?' The contract system is discredited universally, but in no other state in the Union has it sunk to as low an ebb as in Connecticut. Were it an advantage to the citizens of the State as a whole or to the taxpayers there might be justification in the eyes of some, but even here it falls short. The New Haven jail seeks to get work out of its convicts, not by giving them the incentive of a wage, but by physical punishment. At the State prison at Wethersfield the men work on shirts and shoes; few are trained to earn their livelihood when released. The institution is a heavy drain on the taxpayers under the contract system; it yields immense profits to the giant corporation, the Reliance Mfg. Co., the well known Prison Labor Trust. Since the installation of the contract system, the institution has never gotten back to its original basis of educational work for the prisoner and self-support for itself." Warden Ward C. Garner of the State Prison was invited by the Club, which includes the most prominent professional, business and labor people among its members, to state his side of the case, but he failed to show up at the meeting.

LABOR CONDITIONS BAD

Buffalo, N. Y., Dec. 23.—A special investigator before the state factory investigation commission, in session here recently, told of appalling conditions she had found in the local meat packing plant. "About 1,000 people are employed," she said. "There is no distinction made between men and women. One of the buildings is old and ramshackle and has been condemned. In three ofthe rooms that I examined the men and women were forced to work in water standing half an inch deep on the floor. Those were the sausage, the pickling and the pork trimming rooms. In the latter there were seventy-five employes, twenty-three being women. The floors are so wet and slimy that the women have to wear rubber boots or stand on barrel tops. They work at cutting up the hogs. The men frequently lose fingers in the machinery and the women wore many bandages on their hands. The work is very disagreeable and dirty, and the rooms are in a filthy condition."

The plumbers of Kankakee, Ill. secured reduction from 9 hours to 8 without decrease in pay and without friction.

WILL TRY TO AVOID STRIKE

Washington, Dec. 23.--News comes from Chicago that, fearing a gigantic strike of bituminous coal miners of the country will be called on April 1st next, unless the old joint interstate agreement is re-established, coal operators and miners' officials have held a meeting for the purpose of taking steps to avoid a contest between the coal operators and the miners.

BRANDEIS ON TRUSTS

Washington, Dec. 23.--Louis D. Brandeis, the well known Boston lawyer, in testifying before the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce, in dealing with the trust question, gave expression to the following: "The successful trusts have created conditions absolutely inconsistent with America's industrial and social needs. In our just indignation over the crimes disclosed at Los Angeles, should not statesmen seek the cause of this widespread, deliberate outburst of violence? Was it not because they, and men like them, believed that the wage-earner, acting singly or collectively, is not strong enough to secure substantial justice? Is there not a causal connection between the development of these huge and indomitable trusts and the horrible crimes now under investigation? Are not these irresistible trusts important contributing factors of social unrest? Is it not irony to speak of equality of opportunity in a country cursed with their bigness?"

STRONG RESOLUTIONS

Washington, Dec. 23.--The Washington Central Labor Union, at its last meeting adopted a statement and resolutions in the McNamara case. The attempt of individuals and newspapers to cast odium on the leaders of labor was severely condemned, as was also the commission of crime and the McNamaras.

RECOMMENDS INCREASE

Washington, Dec. 23.--In the annual report and estimate just issued by the Government Printing Office, a recommendation of interest was incorporated therein. A number of the organizations employed in the big printery have asked for an increase in wages, and the Public Printer makes the following recommendation: "As a recognition of the increased efficiency of the employes of the office during the past two fiscal years, it is recommended that consideration be given to their requests for an increase in pay." There has been a decrease in the cost of operation of the Government Printing Office during 1911 of $60,790.46 from that of the year 1910.

ISSUES STATEMENT

Washington, Dec. 23.--The officials of International Unions, with headquarters in Indianapolis, Ind., have had prepared in pamphlet form and are sending them broadcast, the statement recently issued relative to the McNamara case.

SHACKLETON APPOINTED COMMISSIONER

London, Dec. 23.--Mr. D. J. Shackleton's appointment as an Insurance Commissioner will, of course, mean that his post of Senior Labour Adviser at the Home Office will become vacant early next year, and some curiosity is felt regarding his successor. It is understood that though no definite steps have been taken in the matter, the names of at least two members of the Labor Party are under consideration in connection with the post. It is anticipated that some difficulty will be experienced in finding a successor unless the post can be made more attractive so far as remuneration is concerned. There is always the possibility that the next appointment may be made outside the ranks of the Parliamentary Labor Party; but there is no keen desire for the post on the part of the men who are most suited for it.

SEAMEN CLOSING RANKS

London, Dec. 23.--It is an open secret that ever since the recent seamen's strike the Seamen's Union has been anxious to follow up the heavy blows which it then dealt to the Shipping Federation and the Free Labor organizers, but the work of getting in new members has taken precedence of other considerations. Since July last over 30,000 new members have been enrolled and preparations are now going forward for a great struggle in the shipping industry, which both sides have been feeling inevitable. The international side of the organization is being attended to by Mr. Havelock Wilson and Mr. Tom Chambers, and meanwhile a great campaign fund of $250,000 is being built up. The Shipping Federation's ticket is at a discount and it is hoped that before long non-union labor may be banished from the shipping industry. In an official report the Union states that its income is now $5,000 per week, and that seamen's wages have been increased by the strike by some $40 or $50 per annum. A new programme of demands is being drawn up which will be presented to the ship owners next year.

STONE MASONS RESUMING ACTIVITY

London, Dec. 23.--Probably no trade has been hit in so adverse a manner during the past few years as that of stonemasonry. Depression of trade, aided by machinery, substitutes, and wild competition amongst employers have tended to create a very depressed tone in this trade. But in spite of these facts the Operative Stonemasons' Society has surmounted tremendous difficulties and now that trade is improving it is recovering lost ground in the direction of membership. Many members who were compelled to leave owing to extensive unemployment, are now returning to the Union. London has shown a good record in this respect.

IN THE COTTON TRADE

London, Dec. 23.--For some time the Lancashire weavers have been in a state of unrest, owing to the fact that the manufacturers have been doing an excellent business and earning good profits, while the employes have not received any advance in wages. The weavers now contemplate seeking an advance of approximately 2s. a week.

A TERRIBLE STORY

Match Worker Contracts an Occupational Disease, Without Hope of Recovery, and Suffers a Living Death.

Washington, Dec. 23.—An article written in a current number of the Survey by John B. Andrews speaks for itself:

"John Werner came to America from Germany and from August 1907 until December 1908 he worked in an Ohio match factory. In Germany, as in practically all civilized countries except the United States, the government does not permit the use of poisonous phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. It has long been known that where this deadly poison is used a terrible disease called "phossy jaw" afflicts the workers. The government of the United States and of the several states, however, still permits the use of the poison, for which there are harmless substitutes. The poison is a little cheaper. But John Werner came to the United States for citizenship. After working one year and four months in an American match factory he contracted "phossy jaw." His teeth dropped out; his jaw bones decayed. He suffered excruciating agony. In spite of two surgical operations in April, 1909, he is condemned to a miserable existence on liquid foods. Still able to drag himself about, he is not strong enough to work. John's wife took in washing until crippled with rheumatism. Then, with the help of relatives in the old country, she and their one little girl returned to Germany. John Werner, helpless and alone, then sued the match corporation, under the employers' liability law, for damages. The corporation through its attorneys denied "that it was guilty of carelessness, negligence, or improper conduct." John Werner did not get one penny. Now, with his face in a bandage tied in a knot at the crown of his head, he drags himself up and down the streets of this match factory town, bearing the following petition:

I, John Werner, a native of Germany, who came to this country for citizenship, laboring in one of Ashland's manufacturing establishments, contracted a disease of the bones of the face. I am unable to work. Have no means. By aid of kindred in the fatherland, wife and child have gone to the old country, and I ask aid from the people of Ashland to get myself into physical condition to make the trip and expense of the trip to join them in the fatherland.

"During the past six months, while living alone in a shed near the railroad track, he has collected with this appeal nearly twenty dollars. The characteristic odor of this occupational disease forces everyone to shun him. He can eat no solid food. Physicians frankly state that his case is 'hopeless'. The story of John Werner is merely typical. In spite of the most extraordinary sanitary precautions, match workers in our country still suffer and die with this loathsome disease, and there are many others to whom early death would have been welcome. Absolute prohibition of the poison is the only remedy. "Phossy jaw" is an unnecessary disease. Congress by passing the Esch bill can stop the use of the deadly phosphorus. The Association for labor legislation appeals to all to urge its passage upon their representatives in Congress."

COMPLIMENTS UNION LABOR

Congressman Lafferty of Oregon Makes Eulogistic Reference to Unions On Floor of House.

Washington, Dec. 23.—During the consideration of the Hughes eight-hour bill in the House of Representatives on Dec. 14, Congressman Lafferty of Oregon, said, in part: "Mr. Speaker, I desire to go on record in favor of labor unions and in favor of the great work organized labor has done for humanity. This bill fixes eight hours as the standard for a day's labor on all Government work. The measure was introduced in this House by the able Member from New Jersey (Mr. Hughes) who is himself a holder of a card in a labor union. The bill was referred to the Committee on Labor, of which the able Member from Pennsylvania (Mr. Wilson), also the holder of a union card, has the honor to be chairman. I am glad to say that there are 13 other Members of this House who hold union cards, and we find them all here on the floor this afternoon working for the passage of this bill. If union labor had done nothing more than to give us the bill now under consideration, it would be entitled to the lasting gratitude of the country. This bill sets the standard at eight hours for a full day's work, with a full day's pay, for all laborers and mechanics. No private employer can hereafter say that the demands of his employes for an eight hour day is unreasonable, when the government has said by this bill, which we are going to pass, that it is reasonable. We are also indebted to organized labor for most of the laws heretofore passed looking to the health, comfort, and safety of employes. The mad rush to obtain money in the United States has been the greatest obstacle in the way of a full and complete enjoyment by our people of the blessings of a free republic. It is high time that a sharp halt was being called. It was written of old: 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' x x x That conditions are growing better is shown by the fact that we are passing this bill this afternoon. The people are rapidly coming to realize that Lincoln's definition meant something, and that this country is for the people. If the people will send men to Congress, regardless of their politics, who are not under obligations to the special interests, we will in a few short years make this country one of, by, and for the people."

SHIPBUILDING STATISTICS

Washington, Dec. 23.—The Census Bureau, in advance sheets giving data in the shipbuilding industry for 1909, shows that the Government at its own works expended in salaries and wages during that year $15,317,000 distributed to 16,428 employes. This produces an average payment per year to each employe of approximately $920. The report does not employ the same method in dealing with private shipbuilding companies, but a comparison can be arrived at by doing a little figuring. The employes in the private plants, including all who draw salary or wages, as in the above comparison, receive an average yearly amount of $515. In the private plants 27,056 men are employed and $13,986.000 was the total sum distributed. The difference in favor of the Government employe is $405. per year, per employe.

Printers of Norwich, N. Y. secured increase of $2. per week.

THE RAILROAD SITUATION

London, Dec. 23.--A strike of railwaymen is at all times a serious matter, and had it taken place at Christmastide, which was at one time threatened, dislocation of business would have been most severely felt. Thanks, however, to the intervention of the Government, such a catastrophe has been avoided. It must not be thought that the possibility of a national railway strike has been by any means shelved, for the majority of railwaymen are seething with dissatisfaction at the Commissioner's Report, and also the working conditions. It must be admitted that nine railway companies have already conceded advances to certain grades of workers. But the other grades affected consider that something also should be done for them. Mr. Buxton, the President of the Board of Trade, acting on behalf of the Government, has requested the various railway companies to reconsider their decision in regard to meeting the representatives of the men, and no doubt this request will carry great weight.

MORE CONCESSIONS BY RAILROADS

London, Dec. 23.--The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company have decided to grant further increases to their employes involving considerable additional expenditure. This company recently granted advances to the lower paid grades, chiefly porters. It is now proposed to increase the scale of pay of goods shunters, foremen passenger shunters, and a number of other men. The advance is very small, amounting generally to 1s. a week, and is considered a mere trifle. It is a well known fact that railwaymen are paid ridiculously small wages, and even with these meagre increases, the companies are already concerned in the matter of how to recoup themselves for the added expense.

SEVERE CRITICISM

Washington, Dec. 23.--That the disastrous wreck of last August on the Lehigh Valley road at Manchester, N. Y., in which twenty-nine persons were killed and sixty-two injured, was due to a defective rail; that weakness was due both to the pressure on the rail and to mill defects, and that the Lehigh company should have known of the existence of the mill defects, are salient features of the report of Hiram W. Belnap, chief inspector of safety appliances of the Interstate Commerce Commission, which has just been made public. Mr. Belnap recommends a sweeping investigation into the whole problem of defective rails. It is understood the Interstate Commerce Commission will discuss this question in it annual report and recommend that the investigation be made.

SWANSEA DOCK STRIKE

London, Dec. 23.--All of the union workmen employed at the Swansea Docks have put down their tools as a protest against the introduction of outside police to protect non-unionists engaged in the loading of the Moulder vessel "Valhalla". The "Valhalla" with fifty non-union workmen on board, began to unload 800 tons of cargo for South America, and the local unionists refused to handle the cargo for the vessel, and, as a consequence, work at the Swansea Docks is now entirely suspended.